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The making of Buddhism in modern Indonesia: South and Southeast Asian networks and agencies, 1900-1959

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Chapter 4

Reclaiming Religious Sites: The Klenteng and the Borobudur

This chapter focuses on two important sites related to the emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia in the twentieth century -- the klenteng and the Borobudur monument. It seeks to explain the extent to which the klenteng and the Borobudur were central to the emergence of Buddhism in modern Indonesia, and how Buddhist agents -- the Peranakan Chinese and the western Theosophists -- regarded these two sites as crucial to the development of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia.

In the context of modern Buddhism, the study of religious sites allows for a deeper understanding of how the global notions of Buddhism reached Indonesia. The exchange of material cultures which happened in the early twentieth century through Buddhist enthusiasts who travelled to different places and brought different religious materials with them[1] is very relevant to what happened in Indonesia. When international Buddhist intellectuals, all of whom have been discussed in Chapter Two, came to Indonesia, they actively participated in introducing Buddhism there and interacted with Buddhist intellectuals in the country. Consequently, Buddhist material culture, such as Pali texts, Buddhist rituals, the Bodhi tree, Buddha's images and the Buddhist flag were brought to Indonesia.

1 R.M. Jaffe, "Buddhist Material Culture, 'Indianism,' and the Construction of Pan-Asian Buddhism in Prewar Japan," *Material Religion* 2, 3 (2006), 266-93.

This chapter briefly discusses the klenteng and the Borobudur as contexts of Vesak, a newly introduced religious ritual in Buddhism. With the emergence of Vesak as well as other new Buddhist traditions and rituals, there arose a need for new spaces to serve as venues for these activities which, as this chapter argues, led to the restoration of the function of the klenteng and the Borobudur.

This argument is supported by the gradual increase of activity in both sites, starting in the late 1920s and early 1930s for some klenteng. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the klenteng and the Borobudur were not only places for religious rituals; they also served as venues that allowed transnational Buddhist networks and Buddhist missionaries to meet and associate with the local religious propagandists and enthusiasts. Hence, these sites also became new locations for Buddhism and consequently centre for Buddhist knowledge reproduction.

In this chapter, the klenteng and the Borobudur are discussed as two separate reclamation projects. The first project focused on a particular klenteng in Batavia and aimed at the purification of the klenteng by making them the centre for Buddhism under the grand project of cultural revitalization of the Chinese. This project was undertaken by the Peranakan Chinese. The second project focused on the Borobudur and it was initiated by the western Theosophists.

This dissertation argues that the existing dimensions of Buddhism at the klenteng and Borobudur represent two groups with intertwined dimensions of heritage, symbolism and identity. The klenteng represented the heritage of the Peranakan Chinese who adopted Buddhism to fit their agenda. On the other hand, the newly discovered Borobudur temple ceased being simply an archaeological monument. Rather, it was considered a Buddhist monument imbibed with the soul of Buddhism through the efforts of the colonial society. Consequently, the Borobudur became a Buddhist symbol for the transnational Buddhists as well as an archaeological project.

4.1. KLENTENG

The term "klenteng" is derived from a local language in Indonesia. Buanadjaya, who wrote an article on the klenteng, explains that the word is an example of an onomatopoeia, that is, a word that phonetically resembles the sound of what is named. In this case, "klenteng" resembles the sound of bells used

during a religious performance.[2] Ong Eng Die, an Indonesian scholar and economist, gives a similar description -- that "klenteng" is a Javanese term for a Chinese temple.[3] Since it is a Javanese term, the term is used only in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the term "klenteng" does not exclusively refer to a Buddhist temple or a Buddhist house of prayer. According to Buanadjaya, before the term klenteng came about, the building which it referred to was known by several other names, such as *Bio*, *Kiong*, *Tong*, *Ting*, *Si* and *Toa Pek Kong*.[4]

Within this study, the definition of Buddhist klenteng is not the main question. Rather, the study focuses on the iconography represented in the klenteng and the degree of Buddhist activities held at certain klenteng. The following section will explore these two characteristics in more detail.

4.1.1. Klenteng Across Batavia as an Overlapping Chinese Enclave

The klenteng are found in many places in Indonesia and studying them is pivotal to understanding the Peranakan Chinese. There are a few studies on the religion of the Peranakan Chinese that regard the klenteng as important. Dennys Lombard and Claudine Salmon's work on the Peranakan Chinese klenteng fills the gap in studies on the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, which mostly focus on socio-economy and politics. Lombard and Salmon claim that the klenteng is an important site for the Peranakan Chinese, as it is crucial for understanding the religious dynamic and the social and individual dimensions of this society. Their research shows that the presence of the klenteng in Indonesia dates back as early as when the Chinese settlers arrived in the Indonesian archipelago, more specifically the seventeenth century in the case of Batavia.[5]

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2 Bs. Buanadjaya, "Mengenal Lebih Dekat: Apakah Klenteng Itu?," in Moerthiko (ed.), *Riwayat Klenteng, Vihara, Lithang, Tempat Ibadah Tridharma se-Java* (Semarang: Sekretariat Empeh Wong Kam Fu, 1980), 95.

3 It is also called Toa Pek Kong or Bio in Chinese. O.E. Die, *Chineezen in Nederlandsch-Indie: Sociografische Monografieën* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1943), 190.

4 Buanadjaya, "Mengenal Lebih Dekat," 97.

5 D. Lombard and C. Salmon, *Le Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et vie collective = The Chinese of Jakarta: Temples and Communal Life* (Gueret: Societe pour l'Etude et la Connaissance du Monde Insullinedien, 1977), xii.

With regard to its function, the klenteng is indicated to have served as an educational site for the Peranakan Chinese. In 1787, they used a klenteng as a centre for education to replace a failing house of education (*roemah-pergoeroehan*) that served at least thirty to forty students.[6]

Thorough research on the klenteng in Batavia reveals that there were at least seventy-two klenteng, including those established in post-Independence Indonesia. Table 4.1 lists the number of klenteng and the time when they were established.[7]

Table 4.1. Number of Klenteng in Batavia from the 17th Century until Post-Independence Indonesia

Date of Construction	Number of Klenteng
Seventeenth century	4
CA Eighteenth century	9
First half of the nineteenth century	9
Second half of the nineteenth century	14
First half of the twentieth century	14
Second half of the twentieth century	22
TOTAL	72

Source: C. Salmon and D. Lombard. *Le Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et vie collective = The Chinese of Jakarta: Temples and Communal Life* (Gueret: Societe pour l'Etude et la Connaissance du Monde Insullinedien, 1977), ii-iii.

In the early twentieth century the number of the klenteng did not increase as much as the previous decade. Unfortunately, there is no record to explain the cause of this decline. However, Lombard and Salmon view the decline as a result of the inflow of Chinese nationalism into Indonesia, combined with the increasing flow of western thought and Confucianism. The establishment of the Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan (THHK) in 1900 further intensified feelings of Chinese nationalism.[8]

6 F. de Haan, *Oude Batavia*, 2nd edition (Bandoeng: Nix, 1935), 392; N.J. Lan (ed.), *Riwajat 40 Taon Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan Batavia (1900-1939)* (Batavia: Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan, 1940), 21.

7 C. Salmon and D. Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta,* ii-iii.

8 Ibid., xxii.

Furthermore, the increase of western influence among the Peranakan Chinese reduced their belief in superstition, which gradually resulted in the deterioration of the proper use of the klenteng. In her work on the decline of the Chinese Council, Monique Erkelens defines this council as a group of Peranakan Chinese which worked together to coordinate social and religious activities. The group was composed of the local elites of the community. Erkelens states that the century saw the decreasing power of the Peranakan Chinese in many ways. Gunadharma Table 4.2 lists the klenteng that are characteristically Buddhist based on the iconography stored in the klenteng.[9]

Table 4.2. Buddhist-oriented Klenteng

No.	Name of Klenteng	Year Founded
1	Jin-de Yuan	Seventeenth century (ca. 1650)
2	Wan-jie Si	Eighteenth century (ca. 1761)
3	Guan-yin Tang (commonly written as Kwan Im Tong)	Late nineteenth century
4	Guan-yin Tang	Late nineteenth century
5	Tian-bao Tang	Twentieth century
6	Tong-shan Tang	ca. 1925
7	Shan-yuan Tang	ca. 1930
8	Jing-fu Tang	ca. 1930
9	Xiang-qing Tang	ca. 1935
10	Shan-fu Tang	ca. 1935
11	Nan-hua Si	ca. 1935 (from Hakka)
12	Yu-qing Shan Tang	ca. 1936
13	Fu-pu Xian Zong-yi-ci	ca. 1927
14	Vihara Tunggal Dharma	ca. 1938

Source: C. Salmon & D. Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, xi-xxiv.

According to Lombard and Salmon, there are two bases for naming a klenteng. Firstly, the klenteng can be named after the principal deity to which it is dedicated. For instance, the name Klenteng Guan-yin Tang means it is

9 Salmon and Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, xi-xxiv. Also see the Appendix, 325-27.

dedicated to Guan-yin -- the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon. Secondly, the klenteng is named after the place of its origin in mainland China or the place where it was built in Batavia**,** such as Klenteng Antjol and Klenteng Tanjung which were named after the place where they were built.[10]

In an interesting book about Chinatowns around the world which was edited by B.P. Wong and Tan Chee-Beng, Chinatowns are defined as enclaves where the Chinese lived. These enclaves were gradually transformed into centres for economic activity.[11] In some places, such as Batavia, the Chinese enclave also contained a klenteng. In his comment about the presence of Klenteng Jinde Yuang in Batavia, Chee-Beng notes "the presence of the Chinese temples that add to the appearance of a Chinatown."[12] While rather vague, this comment suggests the klenteng's important role in the Chinese enclaves.

With the exception of Klenteng Guan-yin, which was explicitly dedicated to the Buddhist pantheon, Guan-yin, other temples played other functions in Chinese society.[13] According to Indonesian scholar Herwiratno, besides being mainly a house of prayer the klenteng also serves as a venue for social activities.[14] He states that the klenteng can be a (1) centre of religious teaching; (2) symbol of the development of Chinese society; (3) centre for learning religious symbols; and (4) centre for social activities and arts.[15]

Kwee Tek Hoay, the founder of the Sam Kaw Hwee and the Batavia Buddhist Association provides another classification of the klenteng, namely:

1. Those that were originally derived from the most ancient belief of the Chinese, whose teaching had been handed down through generations;
2. Those centred on the existence of God and angels (aid to have followed the Taoist school);

10 Vihara is an alternative name that has been mostly used in post-independence times, particularly after 1965 to denote Buddhist orthodoxy as well as the political change implemented by the New Order. Most of the klenteng with "gong" and "miao" in their names became Vihara. See Salmon and Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, xxix-xxx.

11 T. Chee-Beng, "Chinatown: A Reflection," in T. Chee-Beng and B.P. Wong (eds), *Chinatowns Around the World: Gilded Ghetto, Ethnopolis, and Cultural Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 272.

12 Ibid., 277-79.

13 For example, the ashes of deceased ancestor could be enshrined in these temples.

14 M. Herwiratno, "Klenteng: Benteng Terakhir dan Titik Awal Perkembangan Kebudayaan Tionghoa di Indonesia," *Jurnal Lingua Cultura* 1 (2007), 80.

15 Ibid., 80-82.

3. The Mahayana Buddhism klenteng with shrines usually decorated with Buddha, *Bodhisattwas* (*Po-sat*), *arahant* (*O-lo-han*) and a statue of Kwan Yin; and
4. Those that were built by warriors whose images and statues were revered by the people in certain regions.[16]

Kwee adds that in practice these types of klenteng were distinct from one another, particularly in respect to the statues enshrined in them and the types of rituals or ceremonies performed inside them. For instance, a Buddhist klenteng would not place an offering taken from living creatures, such as meat, on the altar.[17]

Echoing the above perspectives, Salmon and Lombard state that aside from serving as the site for religious celebrations, the klenteng also served as a venue for various social ceremonies and festivals, [18] such as those celebrated communally during the Chinese New Year holidays, Tjengbeng (Tomb Sweeping Day), Tjoko (Hungry Ghost Festival) and anniversary days of Chinese gods.

Evidence that the Chinese celebrated Chinese festivals in the klenteng is found in a letter written by the Chinese Council to the Betawi authority seeking permission for the Chinese to celebrate their festivities, and sometimes to perform their daily religious rituals in the klenteng.[19] Aside from religious rituals, the Chinese also incorporated Dutch public holidays in their celebrations in the klenteng, but under the supervision of the Dutch authorities. As indicated by Dutch historian Erkelens in her dissertation, in 1913 the Chinese Council was instructed to supervise prayers in the Glodok and Goenoeng Sahari klenteng which were held to commemorate the centennial of the Dutch Kingdom's independence from French rule.[20] A similar example is the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Dutch

16 Kwee Tek Hoay, *Pemandangan Sam Kauw atas Sifatnja Klenteng-klenteng Tionghoa, Maksoed Dan Toedjoean Dari Pamoedja'an, Kabaekan dan Kafaedahan Jang Didapet oleh Si Pemoedja dengen Dibanding sama Laen-Laen Kapertjajaan dari Berbagi-bagi Bangsa.* (Tjitjoeroeg: Typ. Drukk. Moestika,1949), 32-33.

17 Ibid., 35.

18 C. Salmon and D. Lombard, *Klenteng-klenteng Masyarakat Tionghoa di Jakarta.* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 1985), 49.

19 Malay Minutes, NM 5 (16 January 1928), 317.

20 Erkelens, *The Decline of The Chinese Council of Batavia,* 220.

queen, Wilhelmina. This event was attended not only by the Chinese but also by the Dutch.

By the 1930s, the communal rituals celebrated at some klenteng included very typically Southern (Theravada) Buddhist rituals and practices, such as Vesak and *Asadha*. As discussed in Chapter Three, since the early 1930s Vesak and *Asadha* have been consistently celebrated at the klenteng; they have become part of the klenteng religious cosmos.

It is clear that the klenteng became one of the most important buildings in a Chinese neighbourhood and that it played a crucial social role. It was an educational, religious and cultural centre that reflected the values of the neighbourhood that supported it.[21] Consequently, the klenteng became the only Buddhist centre in colonial Indonesia. It also became the home of the first Buddhist organization founded by the (Peranakan) Chinese society in Indonesia. Indeed, the klenteng was an important enclave where Chinese religious performativity intertwined; it represented their culture.

On New Year's Day, the Chinese usually performed a ritual to honour their ancestors by making offerings on their altar at home and at the klenteng. The offering usually consisted of materials with a symbolic meaning to them, such as cake *tjin* or *kue keranjang* wrapped in banana leaves, which were placed in the shape of a pagoda. Another example comprised sweet foods that symbolically meant good luck and fortune for the year to come.[22] Aside from social and collective rituals, some individual worship, which usually involved honouring ancestors, was also done at the klenteng. Donald Willmott, author of the book titled *The Chinese of Semarang*, points out that this worship mostly involved bowing in front of the altar and making ceremonial offerings of incense.[23] This individual worship was also performed at the individual's house.

The positioning of the klenteng as a place for worship is certain. Japanese scholar, Tsuda Koji, confirms that the function of the klenteng in the past was much more complex, and that, in fact, it served more than a religious function. He claims that the klenteng were hubs of the ethnic Chinese society.[24] Although Tsuda's research mainly focused on the contemporary period, his

21 Ibid., 102.

22 Kwee, *Pemandangan Sam Kauw*, 7.

23 D.E. Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 208.

24 T. Koji, "The Legal and Cultural of Chinese Temples in Contemporary Java,"

Figure 4.1. Chinese parade at Situbondo in East Java on the occasion of the twenty-year anniversary of Queen Wilhelmina, circa 1923. Source: KITLV, 38968.

Figure 4.2. Tjapgome festival circa 1913 in Malang, East Java. Source: KITLV, 153589.

argument is also a resonance of the past as the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* monthly magazine also states that the klenteng was also a venue for socialization among the Chinese.[25]

The klenteng as a social hub also sometimes showed its connection with the arts and culture, as the Chinese often held celebrations there in the form of games and theatrical performances in order to appeal to the common people.[26] It seems that the frequency of these social events obscured the real function of the klenteng, as it became more like a *sociëteit* (private club house) rather than a religious site. Kwee reports that large entertainment performances were usually hosted by those klenteng with weaker religious functions. For instance, the klenteng in Serang, Buitenzorg, Bandung and other places where "El Capone" Tionghoa became an executive member had weaker religious functions, such that these klenteng were then claimed to be gambling dens.[27]

Another important aspect to explore with regards to the klenteng is ownership. Some klenteng were under the Chinese organization named *Kong Koan* (Chinese Council -- *Chineesche Raad*). These included Klenteng Kim Tek Ie (Glodok), Klenteng Wan Kiap Sie (Goenoeng Sahari), Klenteng Antjol and Klenteng Tandjoeng Grogol.[28] In some cases, the Chinese Council was also responsible for management issues, such as the physical renovation of the klenteng whenever necessary. For instance, in 1922, the Council instructed Lieutenant Oeij Kim Liong, one of the six lieutenants in the Chinese Council, to take charge of the renovation of one klenteng.[29] For such undertakings, the Council provided the funds.

Sometimes some klenteng owned by a family had conflicts with the community which claimed ownership of the same klenteng. For example, there was a family-owned klenteng in Welahan which was sold so that the proceeds of the sale could be divided among the heirs.[30] Only a few klenteng employed good management and strict control of the property.

Asian Ethnicity 13, 4 (2012), 396.

25 Kwee Tek Hoay, "kegoenaan jang bener dari Klenteng-klenteng Tionghoa", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 17 (February 1936), 1.

26 Vogelaar in Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, iii.

27 Kwee, "kegoenaan jang bener", 1.

28 Malay Minutes, NM5 (16 January 1928), 316-17.

29 The fund was taken from the Council's expenses. See ibid., NM5 (16 October 1922), 36.

30 Kwee, "kegoenaan jang bener", 2.

Figure 4.3. A Chinese klenteng in Batavia, circa 1900. Source: KITLV, 1400689.

Some klenteng had limited funds of their own called *Doeit Toapekong* (Toapekong fund), which was used as loans to people who wanted to start a business or for other purposes. The loaned amount was f 100, with a small interest upon repayment. Klenteng loans were usually given once a year at the time of *Tjiagwee Tjapgauw* (the Thi Kong ritual). As explained by Kwee, aside from interest from such loans, the klenteng had no other source of income.[31]

Some klenteng were established from donations, which often led to management problems. One interesting case was that of Klenteng Guan-yin (Kwan Im Tong) in Batavia. In the late nineteenth century, a Singaporean woman named Ong Tjiong Hi received a donation in the form of a plot of land in the Kroekoet region in Batavia and she established a klenteng there.[32] Problems arose when the donor of the land passed away and her heir laid a claim to the land. The situation eventually resulted in the demolition of the klenteng in Kroekoet. With the help of another female donor named Tan Eng Toan, Ong Tjiong Hin constructed a new Klenteng Guan-yin in another neighbourhood. The construction took several years to complete because Ong Tjiong Hin died in 1929. The building was finally completed in 1935 with the help of other Klenteng Guan-yin in Batavia, which reportedly took

31 Ibid., 4.

32 *Sin Po*, (January 1936); Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, 176.

Figure 4.4. Chinese Mahayana Buddhist monks in Batavia, circa 1900. Source: KITLV, 6605.

over the management of the klenteng thereafter.[33] In this case, the transfer of management was smooth due to the good relationship between Ong Tjion Hin and the association of Klenteng Guan-yin, some of whose monks were from Singapore.

There is little information regarding how klenteng funds were managed. Available sources indicate that various funding systems were used. In Batavia, the klenteng were mostly funded by donations. Those outside Java, such as in Manado, followed systematic ways of obtaining funds. In 1936, the verslag wrote that the klenteng owned as much as f 4000, which they used to help the poor, pay for death-related ceremonies and finane the education of poor students.

To conclude, the klenteng was an important enclave within the landscape of the Chinese society. Not only was it a venue for religious activities, it was also was an important social hub. This dissertation focuses on the klenteng in Java, particularly in Batavia, because a few of them later became centres for the SKH, as well as Buddhist centres.

33 Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, 176.

4.1.2. "Problematic" Klenteng

The claim about the deteriorating state of the klenteng is found in some issues of the Peranakan publication, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po.* It reported that the Tao klenteng were not propagating the teachings of Lao Tze and the Buddhist klenteng were not part of the Buddhist tradition. Rather, they functioned as sites for ritualistic activities and ceremonies.[34] Additionally, it was reported that both the (Mahayana) Buddhist priest or hwesio and the Chinese Taoist priest were not eagerly performing their religious duties, such as preaching about religion. Consequently, the visitors to these places could not obtain information about their respective religions.[35]

The following paragraphs demonstrate the further decline of the klenteng. With the growing influence of Islam and Christian missionaries, the klenteng's influence waned further. "Many Chinese klenteng with great Chinese arts and architecture, both in China and Indonesia have slowly become extinct. Several klenteng in West Java have recently lost their Chinese character. In Buitenzorg, Klenteng Kwan Im has even taken on the character of a Roman Catholic church or a mosque."[36]

The decline of the klenteng is also associated with the growing interest in Christianity among the Peranakan Chinese, which caused a decrease in their appreciation of the Chinese art and characteristics in the klenteng building. When the interest in Christianity among the Chinese in Indonesia and mainland China grew, western-style churches were built. According to Kwee, this trend brought about a decline in the knowledge of Chinese arts.[37] Simultaneously, some relatively well-maintained klenteng became a haven for beggars, the homeless and the jobless. In some instances, the klenteng became a place where people smoked marijuana and consumed opium. These situations depict the inappropriate use of the klenteng. The contestation from other religions was another cause of the klenteng reform.

34 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Sam Kauw, atawa Tiga Agama jang dianoet oleh Bangsa Tionghoa sadari riboean taon jan laloe", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 76 (January 1941), 14.

35 Ibid., 14.

36 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kagoenaan jang bener dari klenteng-klenteng Tionghoa", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, 17 (February 1936), 7.

37 Ibid., 7.

In the early 1900s, when the Chinese kebatinan was awakening, the Chinese responded to the situation and the reformists voiced their criticism. For instance, Kwee heavily criticized the klenteng for being unproductive. He pointed out that most of the klenteng were not utilized for religious purposes. Some klenteng had turned into gambling and drug dens. In the face of the situation, the educated Chinese and Peranakan Chinese expressed a desire to bring back the religious function of the klenteng.

The klenteng appears to be the first place where cultural and religious reform began. As a symbol of and an embodiment of Chinese culture and beliefs, the klenteng regained its importance to them and it became the focal point of the Peranakan Chinese efforts to retain Chinese culture, religion, and most importantly, Buddhism.

4.1.3. Making the Klenteng more Religiously Buddhist

In the face of such challenges to the klenteng, the Chinese came up with various strategies to tackle the problems. The Chinese Council, which was responsible for some of the Chinese sites in Batavia, supervised the monks, priests and abbots of the temples to ensure they performed the religious ceremonies properly.[38] The Peranakan Chinese kebatinan associations, such as the SKH, along with the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA), played a critical role in this situation.

According to *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, the dismal state of affairs encouraged the SKH and the BBA to revive the klenteng. Both organizations proposed that aside from rituals that were already a tradition in the klenteng, it should also host lectures on spirituality. They believed these lectures would give people more meaning in their lives and they would also start learning about the teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. In other words, the organizations wanted to transform the klenteng into *gredja* Sam Kauw, or a centre for Sam Kauw Churches (the Chinese three religions churches).[39]

Kwee also encouraged making the klenteng into more than just a place of worship. To him, it should serve as a catalyst for Chinese culture and art, as seen in his statement that "The Chinese who uphold their ancestors' belief should preserve the klenteng; not only for a worship place but also for art

38 Erkelens, *The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia*, 102.

39 Kwee, "Kagoenaan jang bener dari klenteng", 6.

and architecture as they are the legacy of their nation."[40] In support of this perspective, publications about the klenteng highlighted their importance. For example, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* consistently featured klenteng in mainland China as a part of the campaign to reintroduce the klenteng. For instance, it featured the Klenteng Kwan Im in Szechuan[41] and the Klenteng Langit in Peiping.[42]

Indeed, the klenteng was of great importance to the Chinese. To the Peranakan Chinese in particular, it was not only an important place of worship, it was also a legacy and source of cultural pride. The educated and elite Peranakan Chinese constantly worked to resuscitate the sacredness of the klenteng.

A special note must be given to the participation of Ong Soe Aan in the campaign to reinvigorate the klenteng. Ong was an officer of the Nederland Indie Anti Opium Vereeniging. As such his duties included ridding the klenteng of opium-related activities.

Ong's visit to colonial Sri Lanka in 1934 proved significant to his belief in Buddhism. His encounter with the Sri Lankan monk Bhikkhu Narada led him to visit and explore a Southern Buddhist monastery. This visit provided him a real view of the imagined Buddhist worship place and further strengthened his reform spirit. In a letter to Kwee, Ong described how a Theravada Buddhist temple in Colombo was arranged, "Each room is decorated with the picture of Buddha Gautama and his disciples, also the life story of the Buddha. Unlike in the Chinese klenteng in Java where pictures were hung on the wall, the figures here are in the form of statues that delicate and finely crafted."[43] Ong also commented on how different the arrangement of the altar was to the klenteng in Java, "... and the offering placed before the statue of the Buddha is only composed of flowers, and water without foods unlike that at the klenteng in

40 Ibid., 7.

41 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Klenteng Kwan Im di Szechuan", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 48 (September 1938), n. pag.

42 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Klenteng Langit di Peiping", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 50 (November 1938), n. pag.

43 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Siapatah jang aken toeroet?", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Philosofie*, 11 (February 1933), 382.

Java."[44] At the end of his letter, he stated that the purification of the klenteng could be done by inviting a Theravada monk from Ceylon. He said "...the priests or *hwesio* wear yellow robe and look educated, most of them speak English and modern. ... In my opinion, the Buddhist klenteng on Java need to learn closely from them or to even invite them to receive clear guidance from them."[45]

Ong's letter and the experience of being the first Peranakan Chinese who came into contact with Southern Buddhism is very significant. This experience did not only inspire him to free the klenteng from unwanted impediments, it also laid the ground for the future visit of the Sri Lankan monk, Bhikkhu Narada, to Java. Accordingly, attempts to purify or revive the original function of the klenteng as a house of worship were launched.[46] The klenteng was an important component of Chinese religions as well as the Chinese community. It was a crucial space in which religious interactions took place and from which potential religious transition or change emerged.

During the time when the reform spirit arose among the Peranakan Chinese, the JBA approached the community with a new concept of Buddhism, which was Southern (Theravada) Buddhism, to help resolve the klenteng's problem. In 1933 Willem Josias van Dienst, the first European Theravada Buddhist who interacted with the Peranakan Chinese, met with Hwesio Lin Feng and Kwee Tek Hoay at the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong. At this meeting that Van Dienst openly criticized the defects of the klenteng and encouraged reformation. In particular, he suggested introducing Southern (Theravada) Buddhism into the klenteng. His idea was well received and both parties agreed to use the klenteng as a centre for learning Buddhism.[47] They also agreed that the Buddhist centre would be complemented with schools and a library.[48] Thus, for the first time, Buddhists in the Batavia declared the klenteng as a centre for Buddhism. In the end, reforming the klenteng to reclaim its religious function by incorporating some productive activities into it made the klenteng a Buddhist centre.

44 Ibid., 382.

45 Ibid., 382.

46 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Memperbaeki klenteng-klenteng di Java", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Philosofie*, 12 (March 1933), 419.

47 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Beroending di Kwan Im Tong", *Moestika Dharma,* 24 (March 1934), 881.

48 Ibid., 881.

To pursue his idea of introducing Southern (Theravada) Buddhism at the klenteng, Van Dienst continued to approach more klenteng in Batavia and Buitenzorg. On 24 February 1934 he visited Klenteng Hok Tek Bio in Buitenzorg, Klenteng Besar Toa See Bio in Batavia, Klenteng Kwan Im tong in Kroekoet and Klenteng Thoeng San Thoeng in Petak Sinkian. The last two klenteng belonged to a Mahayana Buddhist nun (*nikko*). Following the advice of Tjian Kim Hoa, Van Dienst approached the Kong Koan (*Chineesche Raad* or Chinese Council) to ask permission to access other klenteng and teach Buddhism in these places.[49]

As Southern (Theravada) Buddhism was being introduced into the klenteng, Bhikkhu Narada visited Java and offered more support to this effort. Consequently, the klenteng became a centre for learning Buddhism. The klenteng also became a venue for meetings, during one of which Narada delivered his speech on Buddhism. During his twenty-one day visit to Java, Narada visited several klenteng to deliver lectures on Buddhism. Table 4.3 lists the klenteng he visited and the activities he conducted therein.[50]

Table 4.3. Klenteng Visited by Bhikkhu Narada in 1934

No.	Name of Klenteng	Region	Date of Visit and Activity
1	Klenteng Toa See Bio	Batavia	6 March (Activity unspecified)
2	Klenteng Bandoeng	Bandoeng	8 March (Delivered lecture which was attended by almost 1000 people who were mostly Chinese)
3	Klenteng Tin Kok Sih	Solo	11 March (Delivered a lecture (*lezing*)
4	Klenteng Hok Tek Bio	Buitenzorg	14-19 March (Stayed and delivered talks at night)
5	Klenteng Kwan Im Thoeng San Toeng	Petak Sinkian, Batavia	24 March (This klenteng was especially for nuns; thus, mostly women attended the lecture.)

Source: *Moestika Dharma,* 25 (April 1934), 922-24.

49 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Philosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 919-25.

50 Ibid., 922-24.

Table 4.2 shows that Narada's visit to Java was focused mainly on giving lectures on Buddhism. After his visits, the klenteng became the centre of Buddhist organizations. In fact, a branch of the JBA was formed in Batavia during the 22 March 1934 meeting at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong, thereby drawing the klenteng closer to Buddhism.

Following the establishment of the new JBA branch, the klenteng became an important centre for gatherings and lectures. Interestingly, although the klenteng was associated with the Peranakan Chinese, the people from various backgrounds came to these gatherings and lectures. Thus, the klenteng's newly formed membership reflected a wide range of cultural and ethnic diversities. Subsequently, the klenteng became a space for the Chinese Totok, Peranakan Chinese, Europeans, Indians and Indonesians to interact with one another.

The model of a plural society as Michael G. Smith, a social anthropologist, envisaged it developed naturally within the klenteng and without one group trying to dominate the other. This egalitarian interaction was evident in the structure of the new branch of the JBA. In particular, the administrative positions of the branch were filled by representatives of various ethnicities -- the president was Jaganath L. Gandhy, a British Indian; the vice-presidents were Kwee, a Chinese and R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka, a native Indonesian; and the secretaries were Visakha Gunadharma, a Peranakan Chinese and Mej A. Boer, a Dutch woman. The egalitarian nature of the JBA is also seen in the fact that people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds delivered lectures sponsored by the klenteng.

With organizations being formed, the klenteng society started to launch a more solid agenda to propagate Buddhism and other spiritual subjects. The first regular Buddhist program at the klenteng was the weekly lecture, with the first lecture occurring on 26 April 1934. It was delivered by Hwesio Lin Feng Fe and it was titled "The Life of the Buddha Based on the Chinese Text." According to the recorded list in the *Moestika Dharma*, the weekly lecture took full effect in May 1934. On every Sunday of this month the lectures given by different speakers focused on the study of Buddhism.[51]

51 The program of weekly lecture: 3 May: M.N.C. Nag, "Theoretical and Practical Side of Ahimsa and Nirvana;" 10 May: Vogelpoel, "De leer van Boeddha volgens 't begrip en vertaald uit de heilig boeken der Zuidelijke Boeddhisten door bhikkhu Subadra;" 17 May: Chakrabutty, "The Origin and Source of Buddhism;" 24 May: Z. Boer: "Buddhism for Ladies;" 31 May: Hwesio Lin Feng Fei, "Perbandingan antara Agama Buddha dengan agama Kong Hoe Tjoe." Kwee Tek Hoay, "Vergadering pertama dari Java Buddhist Association afdeeling

Once the weekly lectures were fully established, the focus shifted to religious rituals. The establishment of the BBA on 17 May 1934 allowed Buddhism to further penetrate into the klenteng. The celebration of Vesak was introduced for the first time in the klenteng on 28 May 1934 and henceforth became an annual program.[52] Like the weekly lectures, Vesak celebrations were also attended by people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The JBA and the BBA jointly organized the event.

The BBA introduced another new program called the klenteng excursion. The activity involved visits to the klenteng in the vicinity of Djembatan Lima, Batavia.[53] One of the excursions visited Lam Hoa Sie at Petak Sembilan in Batavia, a Buddhist cluster where some hwesio resided. Although the report on this excursion does not offer much detail about the klenteng itself, it is described as being by nature a Buddhist klenteng where Mahayana Buddhist monks dwelled.

The above discussion indicates that some klenteng in Batavia had developed a commitment to Buddhism. Not only had the monks started to commit themselves to Buddhist activities, they also began adapting new material and traditions into the klenteng**.** As an important component of religiosity in the klenteng, a new religious ritual was introduced -- Vesak. This tradition had been associated with the followers of Theravada Buddhism. However, during this time Vesak was adopted as a new celebration to be carried out in the klenteng. Similarly, Pali, a liturgical language for carrying out Southern Buddhist rituals, began to be used in the klenteng.

4.2. THE BOROBUDUR FOR BUDDHISTS

The Borobudur is the largest Buddhist temple in the world which was built

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Batavia", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Philosofie*, 25 (9 May 1934), 967.

52 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Pergerakan kaoem Buddhist di Batavia", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Philosofie*, 26 (June 1934), 1013. Also see: Kwee Sin Kiong, "Memperingetin itoe harian Wesak", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Philosofie*, 26 (June 1934), 1017.

53 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Klooster Lam Hoa Sie di Kampoeng Krendang, Djembatan Lima, Batavia", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 75 (December 1940), n. pag.

during the reign of Syailendra dynasty in eighth century Java. After the fall of the ruling dynasty in the tenth century, the temple was rediscovered in 1814. Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff state that since it was rediscovered the Borobudur has become the object of fascination, contemplation and research of both local and foreign people.[54] Between 1907-1911, a Dutch engineer named Theodoor Van Erp headed the first Borobudur conservation project.

Previous research on the heritage formation of the Borobudur and Javanese antiquities conducted by Dutch colonial historians Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff offers an insight on the Borobudur heritage formation.[55] More importantly, their research suggests that during the awakening of the Greater India visions in the early twentieth century, the Borobudur was one of the oldest surviving temples in the world which received much scholarly and spiritual attention from people across wider Asia. Bloembergen and Eickhoff confirmed that the Borobudur was placed on the new religious and scholarly map.[56] During this period scholars, pilgrims, religious revivalists and transnational and international organizations visited the temple. For Bloembergen and Eickhoff, these activities represented the visitors' search for meaning by investigating the past connection and interaction between Asian peoples through the Borobudur. Consequently, this

54 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples: Archaeological Activities, Imperial Circuits and Heritage Awareness in Java and the Netherlands (1800-1850)," *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 128, 1 (2013), 85.

55 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "Save Borobudur! The Moral Dynamics of Heritage Formation in Indonesia across Orders and Borders, 1930s-1980s," in M.S. Falser (ed.), *Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission From Decay To Recovery.* Proceeding of the 2nd International Workshop on Cultural Heritage and the Temple Angkor: Chair of Global History, Heidelberg University, 8-10 May 2011 (Berlin: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2013); idem., "Decolonizing Borobudur: Moral Engagements and the Fear Of Loss. The Netherlands, Japan and (Post-Colonial) Heritage Politics in Indonesia," in S. Legêne, B. Purwanto and H.S. Nordholt (eds), *Sites, Bodies and Stories: Imagining Indonesia History* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), 33-66; idem., "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples: Archaeological Activities, Imperial Circuits and Heritage Awareness in Java and the Netherlands (1800-1850)," *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 128, 1 (2013), 81-104; idem., "Exchange and the Protection of Java's Antiquities: A Transnational Approach to the Problem of Heritage in Colonial Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, 4 (2013), 893-918.

56 Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples," 95.

led to the next degree of inter-sojourners activity, that is material exchange.[57]

Bloembergen and Eickhoff's analysis about the position of the Borobudur within the scholarly and spiritual world in the early twentieth century offers a crucial perspective for this dissertation. Accordingly, this section investigates how the Buddhist community and Buddhist enthusiasts at that time adopted the Borobudur into their religious cosmos. This section also scrutinizes how their search for meaning led these communities and enthusiasts to interact with the wider Buddhist community, thus enhancing their Buddhist networks and initiating the process of making the Borobudur a part of their Buddhist identity. In other words, this search for meaning has made the Borobudur not only an object of antiquity and the visitors as "the real lover of antiquities." Rather, it has infused this search with a spiritual meaning.[58]

This section also highlights the transfer of cultural materials that took place in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Buddhism was propagated in various ways, such as through the exchange of ideas, practices, teachers, cultural materials and institutions.[59]

Other propagation strategies used by Pan-Asian Buddhists sought to reclaim what was considered sacred ground for Buddhist. This is best exemplified by the movement launched by Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist in India. According to many studies, Dharmapala was less than a conventional Buddhist. He was often portrayed as being modern and influenced by western ideas, primarily because of his relation with the Theosophical Society, which offered him support in the form of networks, supporters and benefactors.[60]

Researcher David Geary, who specializes on Buddhism and the making of world heritages sites, states that Anagarika Dharmapala focused on reviving the sacred site of Buddhism, Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya is one of the

57 Ibid., 95.

58 Sieburgh observed that only a few visitors to Borobudur took notice of what they saw. For example, one visitor, a Chinese butcher, studied the relief by comparing them, making notes and drawing. Sieburgh called him 'the real lover of antiquity'. Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples," 101.

59 D. Geary, "Rebuilding the Navel of the Earth: Buddhist Pilgrimage and Transnational Religious Networks," *Modern Asian Studies* 48 (2014), 647.

60 A. Trevithick, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya, 1811-1949: Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahabodhi Temple* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 2006), 14.

four sites mentioned in classic Buddhist literature (*Mahaparinibbana sutta*) which were specifically designated by the Buddha as holy places for Buddhist pilgrims to visit. In 1891 the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya temple was the subject of a dispute between the Buddhist community and the Hindus. For the Buddhists, the temple was sacred because it was believed to be the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. For the Hindus, the temple was revered as a monument to "Buddha Dev" or Hindu's God. Because he was concerned about the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, Dhammapala came to Bihar, India in 1891 and immediately responded to the issue by establishing the Mahabodhi Society. His main reason for doing so was to reclaim the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya for all Buddhists.[61]

Alan Trevithick, who has researched the history of the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, argues that Bodh Gaya was "a latent ground for action based on pan-Buddhist sensitivities."[62] Furthermore, he contends that Bodh Gaya has been discovered and has now become a modern symbol for the Buddhist population.[63] The story of Bodh Gaya is a testament to the success of the efforts of the Buddhist revivalist movement, making Bodh Gaya not only the centre of the Buddhist sacred zone, but also a holy site for the pilgrimage of all Buddhists worldwide.[64]

Like Bodh Gaya, other Buddhist symbols, rituals, and religious values were also introduced. In 1891 when he first set foot in Bihar, India, Dhammapala had aspired for Buddhists of various nationalities to establish their own Buddhist centres in the Bodh Gaya complex. In one of his articles, Trevithick noted that Dharmapala had written "Burmese, Japanese, Chinese, Siamese [and] Tibetan should have cottages built for each country."[65] It is clear that Dharmapala wanted to have all Buddhist schools represented in Bodh Gaya. In other words, Dhammapala wanted Bodh Gaya to become the centre of Buddhism across schools and traditions.

In her article, Bloembergen, a Dutch cultural historian, wrote that in 1896 Siam's King Chulalongkorn visited the Borobudur. At this visit, there was an exchange of Buddhist knowledge and prayers for material gifts. To Bloembergen this event marked the beginning of the resacralization of the

61 Trevithick, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage,* 1.

62 Ibid., 13.

63 Ibid., 13.

64 Ibid., 1.

65 Ibid., 205.

Borobudur.[66] In early twentieth century Indonesia, the Borobudur was rediscovered after jungle growth around it was cleared. The newly discovered eighth century Buddhist monument received generous attention from the colonial state and orientalists, as well as the budding Buddhist community. The state's concern for antiquities and monuments resulted in the establishment of Oudheidkundige Dienst (Dutch East Indies Archaeological Service). This was followed soon after by a vigorous restoration project.[67] Relevant to this idea, Bloembergen and Eickhoff suggested that the fear of loss also contributed to the restoration project and to the process of making the site as cultural heritage.[68]

The European fascination with Java, particularly with ancient temples, offers an interesting starting point to learn how people from different backgrounds perceive and relate to the Borobudur. A good illustration is C.J. Ryan, a contributor to the *Theosophical Path Magazine.* Ryan wrote some articles describing the European Theosophists' fascination with and interest in ancient temples. In 1917, the *Theosophical Path Magazine* published an article written by Ryan comparing the Borobudur to the American architectural style and focusing on their visible connection. After a few years, in 1924, he wrote another article on the Borobudur which included a discussion on the Mendut temple and the Pawon temple. In it he described the temples as being massive and in severe condition and he wondered about the function of the temples as the shrines of faith but remained puzzled about their real existence.

The campaign to consider the Borobudur as a Buddhist religious site in modern Indonesia, which occurred at about the same time as the case of Bodh Gaya in India, was dominated by the Theosophical Society's networks and support. The connection between Theosophists and the Borobudur can be seen in the admiration of the Theosophical Society's founder for the Borobudur's connection with Indian spirituality.[69] Later, during the leadership of Dirk Van Hinloopen Labberton, Borobudur again received

66 Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "Exchange and the Protection of Java's Antiquities," 896.

67 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Revised edition (London: Verso, 1983), 180

68 Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "Decolonizing Borobudur," 33.

69 M. Bloembergen, "Borobudur in the Light of Asia: Scholars, Pilgrims, and Knowledge Networks of Greater India," in M. Laffan (ed.), *Belonging across the Bay of Bengal: Religious Rites, Colonial Migrations, National Rights* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 36.

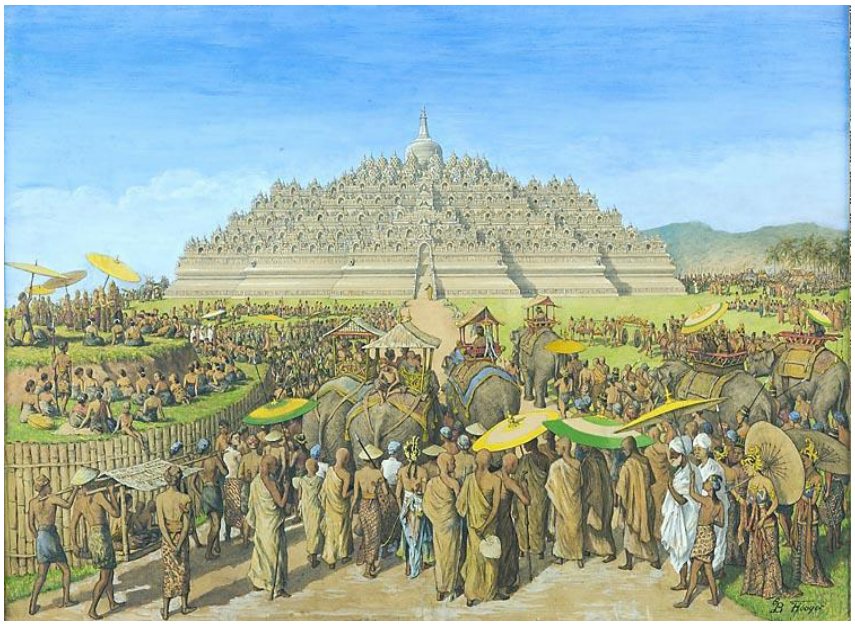

Figure 4.5. Borobudur as a place for pilgrimage by G.B. Hooijer, circa 1919. Source: Koninklijk Institute voor de Tropen. Tropenmuseum.

attention from the Society. For instance, Van Hinloopen Labberton visited the Borobudur during the first summit of the Theosophical Society held in Yogyakarta. During this visit, he addressed the audience and cited Borobudur as a symbol of divine life and also the whole division of the universe, the multiplicity of all forms of life.[70]

It has been argued that the Theosophists had an important role in recovering the religious function of the Borobudur. The most prominent indicator of this role was the Theosophists' initiation of the celebration of Vesak at the Borobudur. They established this celebration as a Buddhist event annually performed at the Borobudur.

The Theosophical Society's first recorded performance of the so-called modern form of the Buddhist ritual, Vesak, was held at the Borobudur complex in 1927.[71] Special credit is given to Mangelaar Meertens, a European

70 *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, (22 April 1908).

71 *Theosofie in Nederlansch Indië=Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland: Officieel Orgaan van de Ned-Indische Theosofische Vereeniging*, 1 (January 1927), 20.

Buddhist leader from Malang,[72] because he was responsible for organizing the annual Vesak celebration at the Borobudur. He was one of the well-known Theosophists and a member of the mainboard (*hoofdbestuur)* of the same organization. During a Theosophical Society conference in Semarang, he was nominated together with Van Leeuwen as a candidate for the President of the Nederlands Indische Theosofische Vereeniging (NITV), or the chairperson for Theosophical Society in colonial Indonesia.[73]

Sources indicate that Meertens was noted for his efforts to revive the function of Buddhist temples in the Indonesian archipelago. The Borobudur and Mendut temples were his main concerns and he tried to restore their functions as centres of worship for Buddhists. He began by convincing Buddhists to commemorate Buddhist holidays, such as Vesak, at the temple. Another of his projects was transferring the management of both temples to Buddhists. Finally, he attempted to establish living quarters *(ashram)* for those who were on a spiritual quest.[74]

In 1930, Meertens published an announcement about the Vesak celebration to be held at the Borobudur temple in the monthly magazine of the NITV. He continued to do so each year in the Theosophical Society's annual report. The 1930 celebration of Vesak was particularly significant as the event took place in the Borobudur instead of the Mendut temple, where it was normally held.[75] To help achieve his goals, Meertens pioneered the establishment of a Buddhist association called the Veereniging voor Boeddhisme (Perkoempoelan Boeat Agama Boeddha *or* Association for Buddhism*)* on 7 October 1935 in Yogyakarta. This association is significant because it was the only association that received permission from the Oudheidkundige Dienst (Dutch East Indies Archaeological Service) to hold an annual Vesak ceremony at the Borobudur complex.[76] Henceforth, the

72 Unfortunately, there is no statistical record on the number of Buddhist in Malang.

73 He obtained 15 votes; meanwhile Van Leeuwen secured 21 votes. Kwee Tek Hoay, "Toedjoean jang tetep", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 46 (July 1938), 1.

74 Ibid., 4.

75 *Theosofie in Nederlansch Indië=Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland*, 4 (April 1930), 209-10.

76 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Berdirinja vereeniging voor Boeddhisme (Pakoempoelan Boeat Agama Boeddha)", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist*

Vesak celebration at the Borobudur complex was always organized by the same association.

Meertens' commitment to make Vesak an important day can be seen in his response to Kwee Tek Hoay, the chairperson of the Batavia Buddhist Association, who invited him to participate in the program of the association. Meertens courteously refused the offer due to his tight schedule. He replied to Kwee Tek Hoay, "at the moment I can only focus on one issue, that it is to make sure the Vesak celebration is observed yearly.[77] Meertens' concerns about making Borobudur characteristically Buddhist is demonstrated in Chapter Five as he had consistently organized Vesak on an annual basis.

The regular celebration of Vesak at the Borobudur became a symbol for the Buddhist community's reconnection to the Buddhism of Indonesia in the past. It became a focal point for the reawakening of Buddhism. According to Kwee Tek Hoay, the Vesak celebration organized by Meertens in the Borobudur and Mendoet temples was a strategy to reinvigorate Buddhism.[78] Within the context of the Buddhist school, Vesak was similarly identified as a sign of the emergence of a Southern (Theravada) Buddhism through the connection with various networks at the time. In other words, Vesak was a result of the connection among the various Buddhist networks at the time.

Another event that contributed to making the Borobudur more religiously Buddhist was the visit of Bhikkhu Narada to colonial Indonesia in April 1934. When Narada visited the Borobudur, he brought with him a Bodhi tree obtained from Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India. This Bodhi tree was planted in the Borobudur complex and it became the first Bodhi tree in the holy site.[79] Consequently, the Borobudur became an increasingly more important site for Buddhists in modern time.

Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong, 77 (February 1941), n. pag. The organization became the second Buddhist organization established by European Buddhist. Unfortunately, there is no sufficient information about this organization.

77 Hoay, "Toedjoean jang tetep",, 4.

78 Ibid., 1-4.

79 The Bodhi tree was brought from India the year before by Meertens. Kwee, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada Thera", 922-24.

4.2.1. The Chinese Buddhists, the Javanese and the Borobudur

It is clear that both the state and the Theosophists were interested in the Borobudur. The question is whether or not the Chinese who were fully committed to reinvigorating their own culture, tradition and religion, -- some of whom were increasingly drawn to Buddhism-- aware of the events surrounding the Borobudur, a structure that was culturally distant from them

In answer to this question, there is evidence that the Peranakan Chinese did connect themselves with Borobudur. They did so through the practice Buddhism and the production of knowledge about the Borobudur. Some sources produced by the Peranakan Chinese show that the Buddhist community in Indonesia was aware of the developing discourse about the Borobudur. The community had connections with members of the Theosophical Society, who were mostly Javanese and Europeans. As stated in Chapter Three, the Batavia Buddhist Association, whose founder was also an active member of the Theosophical Society, invited speakers from the Society to speak about the Borobudur. Among them was Soekirlan, a member of the Javanese Buddhist organization and a Theosophist. He delivered the first lecture about Borobudur entitled "Apa jang Diwarisken oleh Kake Mojang Kita?" (What is the Legacy of Our Ancestors?*)*. In this lecture, he spoke about the deities described in Hinduism that correspond to Buddhism as depicted in the relief of the Borobudur. [80] Another lecture was delivered by C. Beyer. It was titled "Arts: The Life of the Buddha as Depicted in the Relief of Borobudur" (Arts: Penghidoepan Buddha menoeroet oekiran di Boroboedoer). The lecture focussed on a story depicting the life of the Buddha.[81]

Another speaker was R.Ng. Poerbatjaraka, a Javanese literature expert and Leiden-trained philologist who at the time was regarded as the person who was most knowledgeable about the Borobudur. He delivered a lecture titled "Hal Agama Buddha di Java pada Djeman Koeno dan Beberapa Keterangan tentang Boroboedoer" (Buddhism in ancient Java and several descriptions

80 R. Soekirlan, "Apa jang diwarisken oleh kakek mojang kita", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 4 (January 1935), 36.

81 C. B. Arts, "Pengidoepan Buddha menoeroet oekiran di tempel Boroboedoer", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 10 (July 1935), 18-39.

on Borobudur) wherein he highlighted several core points about the temple. Below is a quote from the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* write-up on Poerbatjaraka's lecture.

> It particularly discusses the relief on the temple. The first section focussed on the life history of the Buddha. The second part turned out to be very interesting as no one in the gathering had known about it. This part was about the origin of the Buddha's statue. According to him the Buddha statue only existed after the demise of the Buddha. When Buddha was still alive, he suggested that he shouldn't be made a God *(toapekong).* However, after his passing, the first Buddha statue was made in Greece. Before that period, people only made and used representations of the Buddha's feet or "tapak kaki Buddha". These representations were used as an object of veneration and they were housed in a *stupa*. This *stupa* was usually made of stone and it was shaped like a spiral pillar with a pointed top. It was usually located at a crossroad so it would be visible to the passers-by. The oldest *stupa* was found in Borobudur, the shape of which has undergone some changes over time.[82]

Poerbatjaraka also provided a more detailed description of the Borobudur's main stupa. Located at the top of the temple, it contained an unfinished statue of the Buddha. He explained that the Borobudur is a Buddhist temple of the Mahayana tradition, and this is evidenced by the kind of Buddha statues that were placed in different directions as well as by the Buddha's *mudra* (hand positions). He showed pictures of different Buddha in different mudra, namely *Akshobhya, Ratnasambhawa, Amitabha and Amoghasiddha* and he provided detailed explanations of these pictures.[83]

In addition to the lecture series, some literature on the Borobudur was translated and published by Boekhandel Moestika. For example, *Borobudur*, a book written by an acclaimed Theosophist author, C.W. Leadbeater, was published. This is evidence that the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists participated in the global enthusiasm about Buddhism and the Borobudur.

The participation of the Chinese in the rituals held at the Borobudur is evident. Records show that in the celebration of Vesak, Chinese participation was consistent. For instance, during Vesak in 1935, there were at least forty-

82 R. ng. Poerbatjaraka, "Hal agama Buddha di Java pada djeman koeno dan bebrapa keterangan tentang Boroboedoer", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 4 (January 1935), 20-21.

83 Ibid., 24.

eight Chinese people, men and women, participating in the event at the site.[84] Such participation remained consistent in the following years. For example, the picture in Chapter Five, shows Ong, a Chinese theosophist leader, attending the event together with Meertens.

Based on the sources found, in the late colonial period the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists did show religious sentiment towards the Borobudur. The interest of the Peranakan Chinese in Borobudur continued in the post-independence period**.** Chapter Seven will show how the Borobudur became a religious site for Indonesian Buddhists from all ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

In brief, Buddhism in the early twentieth century Indonesia was very much exposed to the global narrative of Buddhism. Buddhist intellectuals travelling to different places in the world were the major points of connection. While there were not many Buddhist intellectuals from Indonesia travelling outside the country to collect and exchange material cultures of Buddhism, the Buddhist community within the country, particularly the Peranakan Chinese, served as an efficient receptacle for input from the international Buddhist travellers.

The klenteng and the Borobudur became central venues for receiving this input. This chapter has shown how the members of the Buddhist community who came from various backgrounds interacted at different Buddhist sites.

The interest of the European society and the Theosophists specifically revolved around the Borobudur and this greatly influenced the process of reclaiming the neglected religious meaning of the Borobudur as a temple. Further, the notion of global Buddhism is shown in the exchange of material culture, specifically as exemplified through the planting of the Bodhi tree which had been brought directly from India.

The Chinese society, on the other hand, focused on the klenteng and their efforts resulted in re-establishing the religiosity of the klenteng. Additionally, the Chinese Buddhists, in cooperation with the Javanese Theosophists, also engaged in the production of knowledge about the Borobudur**.** By doing so

84 Anonymous, "Peraja'an di Boroboedoer: verslag dari seorang jang hadir", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 9 (June 1935), 38.

they oriented themselves to their Indonesian identity. Their participation in Vesak held at the Borobudur and their enthusiasm about the Borobudur itself is testament to their integration of Indonesian identity.